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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: CHAVEZ CLAIMS ANOTHER U.S. COUP PLOT

Classified By: Political Counselor Francisco Fernandez
Political Counselor, for Reason 1.4(d).

1.(SBU) President Hugo Chavez interrupted his September 10 national broadcast inaugurating nine new medical clinics to claim that the United States and its lackeys in Venezuela, "pitiyanquis," were conspiring to "assassinate" him. According to Chavez a "desperate empire" and its Venezuelan supporters were recruiting active and retired military pilots to drop bombs on Chavez while in the presidential palace Miraflores or on location during his "Alo Presidente" broadcasts. Chavez speculated that the U.S. could paint Venezuelan flags on American F-16s in Curacao to simulate a popular uprising against him.

¶2. (SBU) That night, ardent Chavista talkshow host and Carabobo state gubernatorial candidate Mario Silva broadcast a recording of alleged phone conversations between Army MGEN Wilfredo Barroso Herrera, VADM Millan Millian and Air Force BGEN Eduardo Baez Torrealba. Voices alleged to be the three retired flag officers spoke of seizing Miraflores, the TV stations and the Naval Headquarters. Silva also named former Chavista Defense Minister Raul Isaias Baduel and Golobvision owner Alberto Federico Ravell. According to Silva the opposition was plotting a coup to avoid defeat in the November local and state elections.

¶3. (SBU) Minister of Interior and Justice Tarek El-Aissaimi weighed in on September 11 claiming state intelligence bodies had detected a new plot indicating "business groups, the 2-D Movement and military officers" were conspiring to kill Chavez and overthrow the government. Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro told the media September 11 that a plot against the life of Chavez was originating from the White House. According to the Maduro the BRV was preparing a report "for the world" that would expose the face of the conspirators that included retired and active duty officers, media owners and old politicians. Maduro said the BRV had "no doubt" of the Bush administration's involvement. Maduro alleged that as the "clan" governing the U.S. neared its end they plan to "discombobulate, destabilize and fill the world with blood and violence."

¶4. (C) Comment: Chavez regularly invents a coup or assassination plot by the United States to shore up his base and deflect attention away from the mundane but serious problems crippling the daily lives of regular Venezuelans. This time the BRV has cast a broad net accusing almost every sector that ever opposed Chavez of having a finger in the plot. (Note: The student movement was excluded, probably because nobody would believe it. End Note.) The additional pressure from Venezuela's poor drug enforcement record, the TSA warning notice and the trial of Franklin Duran in Miami may be inspiring a BRV media campaign. Venezuelan officials

and state media are casting Chavez as the victim of the "empire" in order to personalize the election into a referendum over his leadership and "defense of the revolution." End Comment.

CAULFIELD